

# Happiness

The main purpose of everybody's life is happiness. All Beings like happiness, they hate suffering. Therefore we do everything wishing for happiness. Unfortunately, whatever we do for happiness causes us to lose happiness because of not having real understanding and no clear path. Our happiness or suffering completely depends on how much we have purified our mind. Mind creates our physical body. Mind plays the main role in our entire life to keep us active and functional. Mind is the forerunner; mind is the chief of all states. If someone speaks or acts with a wicked mind, suffering follows him because of the polluted mind, just as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox. Negative thoughts, such as cravings, anger, lust etc., ruins our happiness. Simultaneously, if someone speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him, just as one's shadow that never leaves its object. In this situation, we have to purify our mind to the maximum level as much as possible for the sake of peace of mind. Purified mind is the path that leads to our happiness. If we purify our mind from negative thoughts, such as desire, anger, lust, jealousy etc., and also, if we can see the world wisely, then our mind is pure, calm, quiet and strong as well. Positive thoughts like loving kindness, compassion, and generosity bolster peace in mind. If we do something with pure mind, then our mental, verbal and physical actions are also pure and correct. Meditation focuses on purifying the mind.

Developing the mind in a correct way, practicing meritorious thoughts, such as loving kindness, compassion and understanding the world as it is, is meditation. By practicing meditation in Buddhism, we are trained to perceive our mind and body. First, Buddhist meditation aims to purify the mind from hindrances, such as greed and anger, and then understand the reality of the world, which leads to the end of suffering. The final goal of meditation, that the Buddha mentioned, is the lasting happiness, which nobody or nothing can take away. When we experience the world through our senses, such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind, without big attachment toward visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes, body impressions and thoughts, it is the result, which we gain through the practice meditation. Finally, we live in the present moment with full awareness and wisdom perceiving arising and ceasing of all experiences of six senses.

As we mentioned before, the main purpose of Buddhist meditation is to develop mindfulness (*Sati*) and wisdom (*Sampajanna or Panna*). According to Buddhist tradition, meditation can be divided into two ways: tranquility (*Samatha*) meditation and insight (*Vipassana*) meditation. Tranquility meditation leads to the development of mindfulness. We focus our mind on a particular object in the tranquility meditation. Here we purify our mind from negative thoughts, such as desire, anger, jealousy etc. Then our mind is very quiet, calm and focused. Eventually, practicing insight meditation leads to the development of intelligence or wisdom. The final goal of Buddhist meditation is to get rid of suffering. If we can live mindfully, every moment seeing the world reality of impermanence, that is the highest result of meditation. At that moment, we live completely without suffering in the present moment. With this understanding, when we recall the past or the future, there

is be clear attention or awareness fully that now I read my own mind not the real situation. Then we can overcome suffering. Also we see the arising and ceasing about present experience.

When we are going to practice any kind of teaching in Buddhism, we have to fulfil three steps: knowledge, reflection according to knowledge and practice meditation.

The knowledge is one of the most important things that we should have from the beginning to the end on the path of purification. We must have a clear knowledge of where we go, what we practice, and what the results of our practices are. According to this knowledge, we have to know that the first step of liberation is discipline or virtue (*Seela*). The second step is tranquility or concentration (Samadhi) that means mind focused on positive thoughts. The third step is wisdom (*Panna*) that means seeing the impermanence in phenomena, arising and ceasing about all our sensual experiences. After we get this knowledge clearly, we have to think, investigate or reflect on it again and again in our day to day life focusing on our body and mind. Buddhism calls it wise investigation or wise reflection (*Yoniso Manasikara*). We should be smart progress on the reflection of reality as it is, gradually. On the other hand, we have to purify our mind, to bolster the investigation, from negative thoughts, through the practice of meditation. Here we practice tranquility meditation (*Samata Bhavana*) and insight meditation (*Vipassana Bhavana*). When we fulfil all these three qualities mentioned above, we have practiced essential method of mindfulness. Without mindfulness or awareness, we can't achieve real knowledge, reflection or meditation. If we practice all of them, right understanding (*Samma Ditthi*) should develop gradually. Right understanding refers to the realization of impermanence is the very important quality when progress on the path of liberation.

The very first step of meditation is to focus our mind on a particular object, such as reflecting on breathing, loving kindness, or compassion. It is very important to understand the sign of mindfulness (*Sati nimitta*). When we do any kind of meditation, it is important to keep our attention on the tip of our nose or upper part of the lip. Repetitively we should develop this skill. As the result of long-term practice of mindfulness, we acquire the skill to keep our mind in the same wholesome thought for a long time. The skill is called concentration or tranquility. Furthermore, the mindfulness exercise should spread through the daily activities in order to improve our meditation faster. When we are aware of negative thoughts, such as anger, desire and jealousy, they are unable to invade into our mind. Eventually, there are no disturbances to our peace of mind. It means we are happy with positive and wholesome thoughts.

Arising negative thoughts is the nature of the mind. In meditation, we try to eradicate negative thoughts, such as desire, hatred and delusion, and on the other hand cultivate positive thoughts, such as generosity, good-will, compassion, sympathetic joy and wisdom. Specially, the meaning of meditation in Buddhism (pali- *Bhavana*) is cultivation or development of the mind in the correct way, practicing wholesome thoughts (*Bhaveti kusaladhamme asevati vaddheti etayati bhavana*). If we can keep our mind with wholesome (positive) thoughts for a longer time, then we are free from

suffering. It means we are happy. We should be clever to increase the time we live mindfully, that is one of the ways to succeed in our spiritual life.

The purpose of meditation is to focus or keep our mind in the correct way with wholesome (positive) thoughts. When we practice meditation further, we have to focus on one wholesome object for a long time continuously; that is called concentration. Why do we meditate? The purpose of every person is to be happy. Happiness or suffering depends on our point of view about the world. If our mind is wicked by desire, anger or ignorance, then we are not in peace of mind. If our mind is full with wholesome thoughts, such as generosity, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy or wisdom, then our mind is full with happiness. Meditation is considered the greatest merit in Buddhism. The Buddha says practicing merits means practicing happiness (*Sukho punnassa uccayo*). Also cultivating merit will decorate our mind with positive thoughts.

We mostly suffer because desire and anger. If we can free our mind from desire and anger, we are free from suffering. When we meditate, we purify our mind from defilements. We focus our mind on positive thoughts continuously. It means we try to keep our mind in the state of happiness. If we can practice some sort of meditation, such as loving kindness meditation, breathing meditation, it results in calming the mind, and making it quiet, concentrated and happy. When mind is concentrated, our body is also very relaxed, comfortable and pleasant. When we can purify our mind from unwholesome (negative) thoughts, it results happiness, not only in our mind but also in our physical body.

When we start to meditate, our mind goes here and there. That is the nature of the mind. Don't worry. Try to take the mind to the meditation object. When we do it again and again, if we are clever and we have awareness and courage, we can train our mind, as we wish. At the beginning, we can start practicing meditation 5 minutes per day, and later we can increase it little by little.

Among both tranquility (*Samatha*) meditation and insight (*Vipassana*) meditation, tranquility meditation means keeping our mind for a long time in one particular wholesome thought such as loving-kindness. As a result of practicing tranquility meditation, we can keep our mind calm and quiet for a longer time in happiness without defilements. If we can cultivate our mind in the maximum level in tranquility meditation, sometimes we can live for a long time without any other facilities such as food. In this situation, our mind is very rich in merits and happiness. However, this mental condition is not permanent. Anytime it may change. When we are out of meditation, defilements may rush into our mind. Suffering could come and disturb us because tranquility of mind is impermanent. That is why Buddhism teaches us the second step of meditation – insight meditation (*Vipassana Bhavana*).

Insight meditation aims to reflect on the reality of the world, as *Anicca* - the impermanence, *Dukkha* – dissatisfaction, *Anatta* - selflessness. It leads to the eradication of all our sufferings. If we can reflect that all kinds of sensual experiences have the three characteristics mentioned above, with a concentrated mind, then we get rid of suffering little by little. If we have some sort of sensual

experiences, it means five aggregates arise together and they cease together at the same moment. It is very instant and subtle. As a result of the gathering of the five aggregates, when causes are available, we have sensual experience, such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. When causes are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence in Buddhism is the intelligence that "Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) would not come to (the future) occurrence" (*Ahutva Sambhutam Hutva n Bhavissati* - අහුත්වා සම්භුතං භුත්වා න භවිස්සති). If we can understand, the ultimate truth, by practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. Then we live completely in the present moment, seeing the arising and ceasing of our experiences.

According to Buddhism, there are three integral factors – morality, concentration (tranquility) and wisdom for the success of meditation. Morality means the discipline in speech and behavior. When we speak something, it is very important to take care of our words. And when we behave, we should take care of our actions. Before meditation, we should have sufficient discipline to practice meditation. If we don't have good discipline in speech and behavior, it is difficult to fulfill our hopes in spirituality. When we have good discipline, it is easy to succeed in concentration and practice meditation. In meditation, we cultivate two separate qualities of the mind – mindfulness or awareness and tranquility. If we have the real knowledge about the world as The Supreme Buddha mentioned, as the result of practicing concentration, we are able to see the reality of the world: impermanence, dissatisfaction and selflessness. That is the result of practicing insight meditation.

Final aim of meditation in Buddhism is to develop our mind according to *Anicca* - the impermanence, *Dukkha* – dissatisfaction and *Anatta* – selflessness. This understanding builds the quality of permanent equanimity, which is the real happiness without any suffering even though we are in very complex situations. Living with mindfulness and wisdom, while understanding the significance of impermanence of our experiences, is the true path for the real happiness.

## May The Triple Gem Bless You!

### May all beings be well, happy and peaceful!

(Tuesday Dhamma Discussion at LA Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena. 04/28/2015)